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Catherine E. W	olf	HAND, MELANIE JO			
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The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

Ex parte PAULA M. SOSALLA and LISA L. BUSHMAN

Appeal 2009-001834 Application 10/748,411 Technology Center 3700

._____

Decided: 1 May 28, 2009

Before TONI R. SCHEINER, DONALD E. ADAMS, and RICHARD M. LEBOVITZ, *Administrative Patent Judges*.

LEBOVITZ, Administrative Patent Judge.

DECISION ON APPEAL

¹ The two-month time period for filing an appeal or commencing a civil action, as provided for in 37 C.F.R. § 1.304, begins to run from the decided date shown on this page of the decision. The time period does not run from the Mail Date (paper delivery) or Notification Date (electronic delivery).

This is a decision on appeal from the Examiner's final rejection of claims 1-24. Jurisdiction for this appeal is under 35 U.S.C. § 6(b). The final rejection is affirmed.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

The claims are directed to an absorbent article, such as training pants, comprising an interior active graphic disposed on an interior article surface. According to the Specification, an "active graphic" is an appearing or fading graphic that changes its appearance upon exposure to urine or other environmental stimuli (Spec. \P 49). Such graphics can be used to notify the wearer of the occurrence of urine in the article or to encourage the wearer to practice pulling the absorbent article up and down (id. at \P 5).

Claims 1-24 are pending and stand rejected by the Examiner as follows:

- Claims 1-9, 12, and 14-24 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by Erdman (U.S. Pub. Pat. App. No. 2004/0064113, filed Sep. 26, 2002 and published Apr. 1, 2004) (Ans. 3); and
- Claims 10, 11, and 13 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious in view of Erdman (Ans. 7).

Claim 1 is representative and reads as follows:

1. An absorbent article defining a longitudinal direction and a lateral direction, an interior article surface and an exterior article surface opposite said interior article surface, said article comprising:

an outercover defining an interior outercover surface, and an exterior outercover surface opposite said interior outercover surface:

an absorbent body disposed on said interior outercover surface; and

at least one interior graphic disposed on said interior article surface, wherein said at least one interior graphic is an active graphic.

CLAIM INTERPRETATION

Principles of Law

During patent examination, claims

are to be given their broadest reasonable interpretation consistent with the specification, and ... claim language should be read in light of the specification as it would be interpreted by one of ordinary skill in the art." *In re Bond*, 910 F.2d 831, 833 (Fed.Cir.1990); *accord Bass*, 314 F.3d at 577 ("[T]he PTO must apply the broadest reasonable meaning to the claim language, taking into account any definitions presented in the specification."); *In re Cortright*, 165 F.3d 1353, 1358 (Fed.Cir.1999) ("Although the PTO must give claims their broadest reasonable interpretation, this interpretation must be consistent with the one that those skilled in the art would reach."); *Hyatt*, 211 F.3d at 1372.

In re American Academy Of Science Tech Center, 367 F.3d 1359, 1364 (Fed. Cir. 2004).

Analysis

Claim 1 is drawn to an absorbent article stated in the preamble to have "an interior article surface and an exterior article surface opposite said interior article surface." The article comprises: 1) an outercover defining interior and exterior outercover surfaces; 2) an absorbent body disposed on the interior outercover surface; and 3) an interior graphic "disposed on said interior article surface."

At issue in this Appeal is the meaning of "an interior article surface." Thus, before the claim can be compared to the prior art, the words in the claim must be properly interpreted.

The claimed graphic is recited in the claim to be disposed on "said interior article surface." "[A]n interior article surface" is said to be opposite an exterior article surface in the claim preamble,² but otherwise its position is not specified in the claim.

The terms "a" and "an" are indefinite articles customary interpreted to mean "at least one," permitting the inclusion of additional elements not recited in the claim. *See KCJ Corp. v. Kinetic Concepts, Inc.*, 223 F.3d 1351, 1356 (Fed. Cir. 2000). Therefore, the phrase "an interior article surface" would be understood to mean that the claimed absorbent article has at least one interior article surface, but that the article can comprise additional interior article surfaces. This interpretation is wholly consistent with the Specification.

According to the Specification,

The bodyside liner 42 may be disposed toward the interior article surface 28; for example, at least a portion of the bodyside liner 42 may provide the interior article surface 28. In particular, the bodyside liner 42 may define an interior liner surface 94 and an exterior liner surface 96 opposite the interior liner surface; accordingly, the interior liner surface 94 may provide at least a portion of the interior article surface 28.

(Spec. ¶ 27; emphasis added.)

Thus, while the "interior liner surface" can provide "at least a portion of the interior article surface," the Specification does not limit the location of the *interior article surface* to the *interior liner surface*. In other words, at least one "interior article surface" as recited in claim 1 can be the interior liner surface, but the article can comprise other interior article surfaces.

² Claim 1: "an interior article surface and an exterior article surface opposite said interior article surface."

The ordinary meaning of the term "interior" is "being within; inside of anything; internal; inner; further toward a center." An interior article surface would therefore be interpreted to read on any internal surface inside the claimed absorbent article. Consistent with this interpretation, the interior graphic – recited in claim 1 as disposed on "said interior article surface" – is described in the Specification as being placed on various internal surfaces of the absorbent article. This configuration is explained in more detail below:

1. Figure 5B, reproduced below, shows a partial section of an absorbent article. "The interior graphics . . . can be disposed on the liner 42, which includes either surface 94 or 96 of the liner, on the surface of the absorbent body 44 that faces the liner 42, or between the absorbent body 44 and the liner 42" (Spec. \P 47; *see also* \P 27).

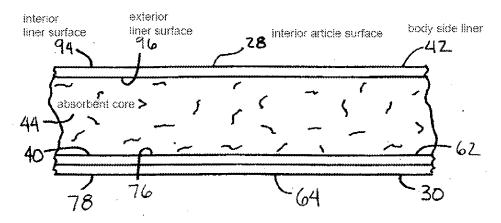


Figure 5B, above, shows a partial section of an absorbent article.

2. In addition, the Specification describes the graphic as alternatively "applied to a layer placed with or near the liner 42, such as on an interior graphic layer 98" (id. at ¶ 44; see also ¶ 48). Figure 5C, reproduced below, shows the interior graphic layer 98.

³ *The Random House College Dictionary* 695 (Rev. ed. 1975).

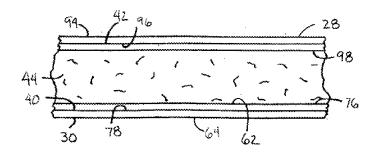


Figure 5C, above, shows a partial section of an absorbent article with the interior graphic layer beneath the liner 42, but internal to the absorbent article.

To sum it up, the phrase "[a]n interior article surface" as recited in claim 1 would be understood by persons of ordinary skill in the art having read the Specification (*In re American Academy Of Science Tech Center*, 367 F.3d at 1364) to mean at least one surface inside the claimed absorbent article upon which the interior graphic is placed.

ANTICIPATION BY ERDMAN

Claims 1-9, 12 and 14-24 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by Erdman (Ans. 3).

Issue

Does Erdman describe the claimed absorbent article with "at least one interior graphic" disposed on an "interior article surface" of the absorbent article as recited in the properly interpreted claim 1?

Findings of Fact ("FF")

1. Erdman describes an absorbent article, such as training pants for a child, that include wetness indicators *present* when an article is *dry* and which

disappear when wet (Erdman, \P 2). Additional indicators may be included that are *not present* when the article is dry, but appear when wetted (id.).

- 2. In one embodiment, Erdman describes an article with an absorbent core disposed between a top sheet (the article inner liner) and back sheet (the outer article backing) (Erdman, ¶ 13).
- 3. "Disposed on the absorbent core facing surface of the back sheet" is a graphic that indicates "when the absorbent article is insulted with" urine (Erdman, \P 13).
- 4. Erdman describes the graphic as disposed between the back sheet and absorbent core (Erdman, \P 14). The graphic can be "printed directly on a surface of the back sheet, or on an additional layer(s) and then disposed between the absorbent core and the back sheet" (*id.*; *see also* \P 34).

Analysis

The only issue in dispute in this rejection is whether the Erdman patent describes an absorbent article with at least one interior graphic disposed on an interior article surface as recited in claim 1.

Referring to paragraph 34 of Erdman, the Examiner contends that Erdman "teaches" that "graphics may be disposed anywhere in the instant absorbent garment, and printed on any portion thereof" it (Ans. 8; FF3 & 4).

Appellants contend: "The <u>article</u> can only have one interior surface" (Reply Br. 5). Appellants assert that the Examiner erred in finding "any surface that is not an exterior surface of the <u>article</u> must be the interior surface of the <u>article</u>" (*id.*). They explain that an absorbent article generally has three layers – a cover, absorbent, and liner – with a total of six surfaces

and that "[o]nly one of these six surfaces can be the interior surface of the article" (id. at 5-6). See also App. Br. 5-6.

Appellants interpret "an interior article surface" in claim 1 to be synonymous with the internal surface of a bodyside liner of an absorbent article. This interpretation is not the broadest reasonable interpretation that would be understood by persons of ordinary skill in the art in the context of the Specification. *In re American Academy Of Science Tech Center*, 367 F.3d at 1364. As discussed above, the ordinary meaning of the phrase "an interior article surface" is any surface "inside of" the absorbent article" (*see supra* at p. 6). Consistent with this interpretation is the statement in the Specification that the "interior liner surface" can provide "at least a portion of the interior article surface" (Spec. ¶ 47). That is, the *interior article surface* can be formed from other internal surfaces of the absorbent article, in addition to the interior liner surface. The Specification therefore does not describe the interior article surface as identical to the bodyside liner surface as Appellants argue it should be understood.

Furthermore, the Specification specifically states that the internal graphic can be disposed on other interior surfaces of the article (Spec. ¶¶ 27, 44, 47, & 48; *see supra* at pp. 5-6, reproduced Figures 5B and 5C). While it is improper to read limitations from the Specification into the claims, the Specification must be consulted when interpreting a claim.

Appellants are reminded that, during patent examination, claims are given their broadest reasonable interpretation, even when alternative interpretations are available. *In re Morris*, 127 F.3d 1048, 1056 (Fed. Cir. 1997). "Giving claims their broadest reasonable construction 'serves the public interest by reducing the possibility that claims, finally allowed, will

be given broader scope than is justified" (internal citations omitted). *In re American Academy Of Science Tech Center*, 367 F.3d at 1364.

Appellants also argue that Erdman does not "disclose or enable how a graphic might be applied to an interior article surface, what inks or dyes might be used to avoid transfer to the wearer's skin, etc." (App. Br. 6).

To the contrary, Erdman provides specific disclosure on how graphics are imprinted on surfaces of the absorbent article (Erdman, ¶¶ 85 & 107-111). Appellants have not identified a deficiency in Erdman's teachings, but rather make broad, factually unsupported allegations. "[A]rguments of counsel cannot take the place of evidence lacking in the record." *Estee Lauder Inc. v. L'Oreal, S.A.*, 129 F.3d 588, 595 (Fed. Cir. 1997) (quoting *Knorr v. Pearson*, 671 F.2d 1368, 1373 (CCPA 1982).

OBVIOUSNESS OVER ERDMAN

Claims 10, 11 and 13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious in view of Erdman (Ans. 7).

Based on specific factual findings, the Examiner reasoned that the subject matter of claims 10, 11 and 13 would have been obvious to persons of ordinary skill in the art (Ans. 7-8). As Appellants do not identify any defect in the Examiner's reasoning, and we find none, we affirm the rejection of these claims for the reasons stated by the Examiner.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Erdman describes an absorbent article with "at least one interior graphic" disposed on an "interior article surface" of the absorbent article as recited in the properly interpreted claim 1.

The rejection of claim 1 is affirmed. Claims 2-9, 12 and 14-24 fall with claim 1 because separate reasons for their patentability were not provided. *See* 37 C.F.R. § 41.37(c)(1)(vii).

The rejection of claims 10, 11 and 13 is affirmed.

TIME PERIOD FOR RESPONSE

No time period for taking any subsequent action in connection with this appeal may be extended under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a).

<u>AFFIRMED</u>

cdc

KIMBERLY-CLARK WORLDWIDE, INC. Catherine E. Wolf 401 NORTH LAKE STREET NEENAH WI 54956

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	Notice of References Cited				Application/Control No.		Applicant(s)/Patent Under Reexamination Sosalla, Paula et al.			
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U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS										
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^{*}A copy of this reference is not being furnished with this Office action. (See Manual of Patent Examining Procedure, Section 707.05(a).)
**APS encompasses any electronic search i.e. text, image, and Commercial Databases.
U.S. Patent and Trademark Office
PTO-892 (Rev. 03-98)

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Random House College Diction Revised Edition

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Based on The Random House Dictionary of the English Language

THE UNABRIDGED EDITION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Prefaces	v				
Editorial Staff	vi				
Consultant Staff	vii				
Indo-European Language Chart					
Historical Sketch of the English Language					
Etymology Key					
Pronunciation Key	xvi				
Pronunciation of English					
Usage, Dialects, and Functional Varieties	xix				
Guide to the Dictionary	xxii				
Table of English Sounds and Their Common Spellings	xxxii				
A DICTIONARY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE	1				
Signs and Symbols	1535				
United States Colleges and Universities					
Canadian Colleges and Universities					
English Given Names					
Basic Manual of Style	1559				

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Manufactured in the United States of America

ach other: interdependent in-nce, in/ter-de-pend/en-cy, n

in'tor dikt'), n. 1. Civil Law.
n. Cath. Ch. a punishment by
ited from participation in cerw. a general or special order of
ing or commanding an act.
5. Eccles. to cut off authoritailcal functions and privileges,
hardment: Constant air attacks
1. [< L interdict(um) prohibiictus forbidden (ptp. of interr. ME entredit < OF] —in'.

han), n. 1. the act or an instate of being interdicted. 3. ry, add. it tht'), v.i., v.i., -tat-ed, -tat-ef ingers of both hands. —in-fishan), a

ar dis/e ple ner/e), adj. com-re academic disciplines.

or dis/o plo ner/ō), adj. comro academic disciplines.

1. one's feelings or attitudes
ariosity, as aroused by somen or thing that arouses such
its current interest. His chief
to excite such feelings or attiit. 4. a legal share, right, or
yor a business. 5. the enterone has such an interest. 6.
persons exerting influence on
n a given enterprise, industry,
it; advantage: Keep your own
for one's own advantage or
i.a. a sum paid or charged for
ing money. b. the rate perd by such payment or charge,
is of, to the advantage or adte interests of good government,
lon or curiosity of: Mystery
to be of concern to (a person,
ause to take a person in an
oncerns, lit., it is between; r.
cern, lit., to be between. See
ri stid. ta res/tid) adi.

ri stid, -tə res'tid), adj. 1. ;; concerned: Interested mempating; having an interest or 3. having the attention or spectator. 4. influenced by interested witness. —in'ternoss.n.

interestea warrows.

noss, n.

I people drawn or acting toerost, concern, or purpose.
-tri sting, taresting), adj,
g the attention or curiosity:
ting.ly, adv.—in/ter-est—Ant. dull.

food.—fac.ing.—n.l. a

—Ant. dull.

-faced, -facing. —n. 1. a
1 boundary of two bodies or
1 bodies of the state of the state of the state
2 bodies of the state of the state of the state
2 bodies of the state of the st -v.i. 6. to be in an interface.
-ln/ter-fa/ciai, adj.
sical Chem. the surface tends.

-ln/ter-fa/cal, aaj.
sical Chem. the surface tends,
of or operating or occurring
ging to different religions.
sred, -fer-ing. 1. to come
another, esp. with the effect
e (often fol. by with): Connk. 2. to take part in the
l. by with or in): Io interfere
foot or leg against another
a. to obstruct the action
barred by the rules. b.
ceammate carrying the bail.
6. to clask; come in colliof two nations may interfere.
) strike; modeled on MF
-in/ter-fer/ing-ly, adv.
n. 1. the act, fact, or an
ithing that interferes. 3.
o or more light, sound, or
o reinforce or cancel each
ng wave being equal to the
sining waves. 4. Radio a.
I by the reception of undeice producing the incoheriting effect of previously
arning. 6. Football. a. the
sing ahead of a bail.
as free erective from
catchoffer of profits), adj.
m'I ter), n. 1. Optics. a
ht into two ray beams and
uce interference, used to
raction, and astronomical
to for measuring the angudiameter of glant stars by
nema of light emitted by
(in/ter fer/o mo/etry, n.
r-dig/tital, adj. -ly, adv.
r-dig/tital, adj. -ly, adv.

r.dig/i.tal, adj.; -ly, adv. r.dis/triot, adj. r.fac/tion-al, adj.

in-ter-fer-on (in/tar (ēr/on), n. Biochem. a protein substance produced by virus-invaded cells that prevents reproduction of the virus. [INTERFERE + -on arbitrary suffix] in-ter-fer-tille (in/tar (fir/e)], adj. Boi., Zool. able to interbreed. —in/ter-fer-til/i-ty, n. in-ter-file (in/tar fil/), t..., -filed, -fil-ing. to combine two or more similarly arranged sets of items, as cards, documents, etc., into a single arrangement.

interferon

Inter/flor mon/ologue, Literature. a form of stream-of-consciousness writing that represents the inner thoughts of a character.

Interj., interjection.

Interjacent (in/tar jā/sant). adj. between or among others; intervening; intermediate. [< L interjacent. (s. of interjacents) lying between, prp. of interjacer. See INTER-ADJACENT] — in/ter-je/cence, n.

In-ter-ject (in/tar jekt/), v.l. 1. to interpolate; interpose: to interject a clarification of a previous statement. 2. Obs. to come between. [< L interject(us) thrown between (ptp. of interjicere) = inter. INTER-+-jec-(var. of jacr. s. of jacre to throw) + tus ptp. suffus] —in/ter-jec-tor, n.

—Syn. 1. introduce, insert.

In-ter-jec-tion (in/tar jek/shan), n. 1. the act of putting between; insertion; interposition. 2. the utterance of a word or phrase expressive of emotion; the uttering of an exclamation. 3. something interjected, as a remark. 4. Gram. a grammatically autonomous word or expression, esp. one conveying emotion, as Hey! Good grief! [ME interjectory (in/tar jek/ta rā). adj.—in/ter-jec/tion.al. in-ter-jec-tur-al (in/tar jek/char al). in-ter-jec/tion.al. in-ter-jec-tur-al (in/tar jek/char al). in-ter-jec-tory (in/tar jek/ta rā). adj.—in/ter-jec/tion.al-iy, adv.

In-ter-lace (in/tar lās/), v., -laced, -lac-ing, -v.i. 1. to cross one another als if woven together; intertwine. Their hands interlaced. —nl. 2. to unite or lace. In ter-lace (in/tar lace dery). In-ter-lace ment, n.

In/terlacing arcade/, an arcade, as a lin woven together; intertwine. 3. to mingle; blend. [Inversed and cut that each arch seems to intersect and be intersected by one or more other arches, giving an interlaced effect to the whole.

In/ter-lacing arcade/, an arcade esp. a blind one. composed of arches (in/ter-lacing arcade/s) in/ter-lacing arcade/s an arcade esp. a blind one. composed of arches (in/ter-lacing arcade/s) in/ter-givinen.

Interlacing arcade/s in/ter-lace/ment, n.

Interlacing arcade/s an arcade esp. a blind one. composed of arches (in/ter-lacing arcade/s) as in h

Interlaken (in/tər lä/kən, in/tər lä/kən), n. a town in central Switzerland: tourist center. 4738 (1960). Inter-lam-inate (in/tər lam/ənāt/), s.t., -nat-ed, -nat-ing. to interlay or lay between laminae; interstratify.—in-ter-lam/ina/tion, n. in-ter-lam/(in/tər lä/d/), s.t., 1. to diversify by mixing in or interjecting something unique, striking, or contrasting (usually fol. by with): to interlard one's speech with oaths. 2. (of things) to be intermixed in. 3. Obs. to mix. as fat with lean. [Inter-+ Lard, r. enterlard < MF entrelard(er)]. in-ter-lay (in/tər lä/), s.t., -laid, -laying, 1. to lay between; interpose. 2. to diversify with something laid between or inserted: to interlay sither with gold. In-ter-leaf (in/tər lä/), n., pl. -leaves (-lēvz/), an additional leaf, usually blank, inserted between the regular printed leaves of a book, as for a reader's notes. In-ter-leave (In/tər lëv/), s.t., -leaved, -leav-ing. 1. to provide blank leaves in (a book) for notes or written comments. 2. to insert blank leaves between (the regular printed leaves). 10 hook) for notes or written comments. 2. to insert blank leaves between (the regular in/-). 1. a system by which one library obtains a publication for a reader by borrowing it from another library. 2. a loan made by this system.

In-ter-line (in/tər lin/), s.t., -lined, -lin-ing. 1, to write or insert (words, bhrases, etc.) between the lines of writing or

In/ter-II/Drary loan/ (in/tar II/bere E. bra 78. -br8. in'-). 1. a system by which one library obtains a publication for a reader by borrowing it from another library. 2. a loan made by this system.

In-ter-Ilne! (in/tar Iin'). v.t., -lined, -lin-ing. 1. to write or insert (words, phrases, etc.) between the lines of writing or print. 2. to mark or inscribe (a document, bool; etc.) between the lines. [ME < ML interline(are). See INTER-, LINE!]

in-ter-Ilne? (in/tar Iin') e.t., -lined, -lin-ing, to provide with an interlining. [INTER-+ LINE!] —in/ter-lin'er, n.

in-ter-Ilne ar (in'tar Iin's ar, ad; Also, in'ter-lin'er, n.

in-ter-Ilne ar (in'tar Iin's ar, ad; Also, in'ter-lin'er, n.

in ter-line ar (in'tar Iin's ar, ad; Also, in'ter-lin'er, n.

In stuated or inserted between lines, as of the lines of print in a book: an interlinear translation. 2. having interpolated lines; interlined. 3. having the same text in various languages set in alternate lines: the interlinear matter, as a translation. [< ML interlinear(is)] —in'ter-lin'e-ar-ly, in'-ter-lin'e-al-ly, adv.

in-ter-lin-e-ate (in'tar Iin's at'), v.t., -at-ed, -at-ing. interline! [< ML interlinear(ius), ptp, of interlineare to interlineare to interline [in'tar Iin'd'g'gwo), n. an artificial language for international communication, based primarily upon the Romance languages and intended mainly as a common language for scientists. [< It: lit., interlanguage] in-ter-lin-ing? (in'tar Iin'ning), n. an inner lining placed between the ordinary lining and the outer fabric of a garment. [Interlining? (in'tar Iin'ning), n. an inner lining placed between the ordinary lining or print. [Interline1] + Inol' inter-link (in'tar Iin'ning), n. an inner lining placed between the ordinary so that all action is synchronized.

—v.t. 3. to lock one with another: The branches of the trees interlock to form a natural archivay. 2. to fit into each other, as parts of machinery, so that all action is synchronized.

—v.t. 3. to lock one with another: The branches of the trees interlock

interiocutor (as). See interiocutor (as). See interiocutor (as). See interiocutor Also. interiocutor (as). Interiocutor (as).

-TRIX]
in ter lope (in/tər lop'), v.i., loped, lop-ing. 1. to intrude into some region or field of trade without a proper
license. 2. to thrust oneself into the affairs of others. [prob.
back formation from INTERLOPER = INTER- + loper (see
LANDLOPER)] —in/ter-lop/er, n. —Syn. 1. trespass, poach,
encroach.

encroach.

interlude (in'tər iōōd'), n. 1. an intervening episode, period, space, etc. 2. an early English farce or comedy. 3. any intermediate performance or entertainment, as between the acts of a play. 4. an instrumental passage or composition played between the parts of a song, church service, drama, etc. [ME < ML interlud(ium) = L interinter + lūd(us) play + -ium, neut. of -ius -ious] interlu-nar (in'tər iōō'nar), adj. pertaining to the moon's monthly period of invisibility between the old moon and the new.

in ter-lu-na-tion (in/tər loo nā/shən), n. the interlunar

period.
in ter mar riage (in/tər mar/i), n. 1. marriage or the state of marriage between a man and woman of different races, religions, or ethnic groups. 2. marriage or the state of marriage between a man and woman within a specific group, as required by custom or law; endogamy.
in ter mar ry (in/tər mar/ē), v.i., -ried, -ry-ing. 1. to become connected by marriage, as two families, tribes, castes, or religions. 2. to marry within one's family. 3. to marry outside one's religion, ethnic group, etc.
in ter med die (in/tər med/əl), v.i., -dled, -dling. to take in/ter-i-on/ic, adi.

in/ter-il/brary, adi.

in/ter-fi/brous, adj. in/ter-gov/ern-men/tal, adj. in/ter-i-on/ic, adj. in/ter-li/brar-y, adj.

act. Table, dare, art; ebb, Equal; 1f, Ice; hot, over, Order; oil; book; over; out; up, Orge; o = a as in alone; chief; sing; shoe; thin; that; the as in measure; or as in button (but/on), fire (fivr). See the full key inside the front cover.

